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ABSTRACT

This book is intended for people who want to organize their own learning either individually or as a member of a community group rather than fit into a more predetermined and perhaps more formal educational experience. Section 1 focuses on learning to a purpose. Section 2 discusses getting going. In the next section are suggestions for finding information about the operation of literacy groups. Section 4 addresses fund raising and other sources of money. Chapter 5 looks at learners and learning. Topics include helping someone else to learn ways of learning, strategies used in reading, and what to think about when writing. Chapter 6 discusses reading and writing materials, including how to make materials. Chapter 7 summarizes the content, offers suggestions, provides a list of resources, and contains a check list to develop one's own list of local contacts. (YLB)

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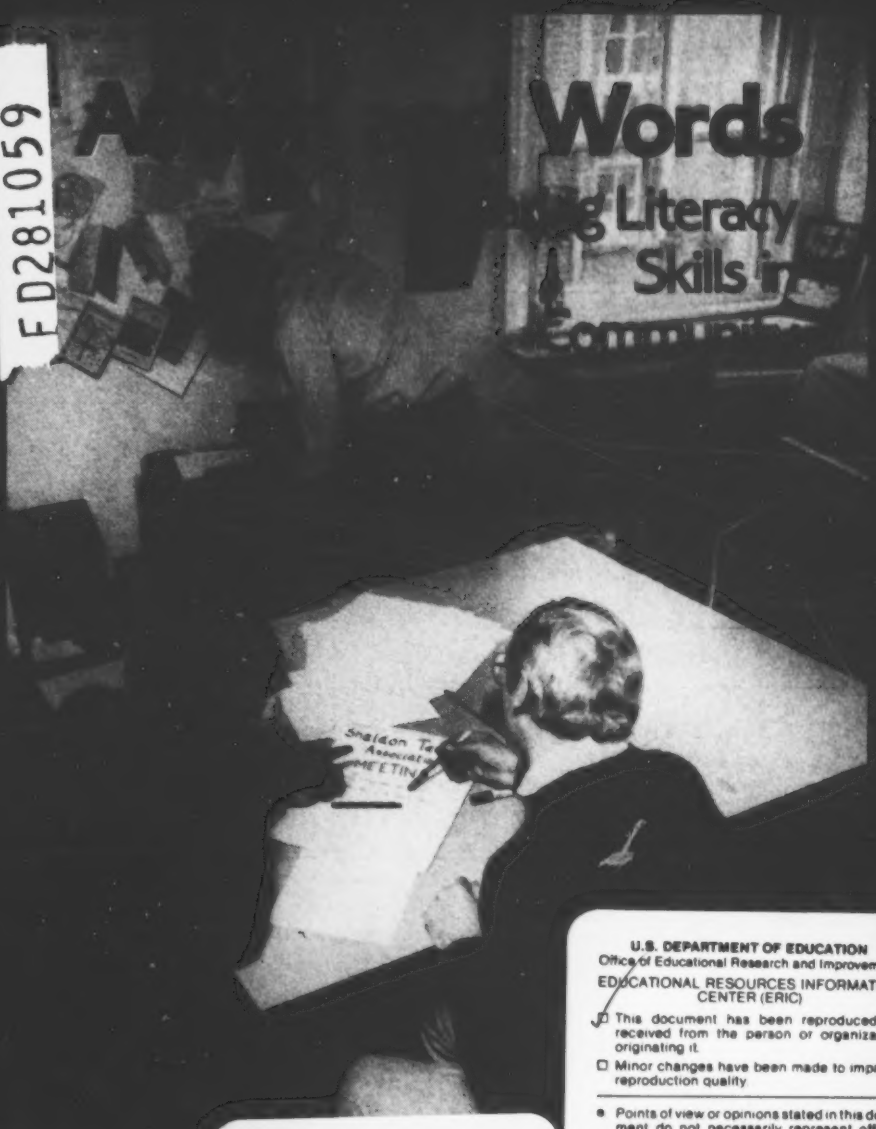

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ALBSU

Foreword

It is a particular pleasure to write a Foreword for a book that is intended for community groups rather than professional educators. Too often education, including basic education, is seen as the preserve of those of us whose working lives are predominantly concerned with that aspect of living rather than accepted as something that permeates almost every activity.

'Action and Words' is intended for people who want to organise their own learning either individually or as a member of a group rather than fit into a more pre-determined and perhaps more formal educational experience. It has been produced by the National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes in part because of the considerable number of requests from community groups received by NFVLS for advice and guidance. I am pleased that ALBSU, one of the major funding sources of NFVLS, has been able to publish it at cost and I hope that it receives as wide a circulation as possible.

Alan Wells
Director
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

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Action and Words

Sharing Literacy Skills in Community Groups

NFVLS/ALBSU

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1

Learning to a Purpose

Most adults in this country learned something about reading and writing at school. Very few learned all that they would want. Who has not spent hours trying to find a way of expressing what they want to say in a letter? Even the better readers amongst us find that they can read a page of a book/newspaper report and not retain any meaning from it. Most people get by with what they have, but there are plenty of others who are looking for the chance - either individually or as a group - to add to what they can do.

This book is for any group of people who want to work together to improve their literacy skills.

Most people have only experienced education as something that is provided in a set form by a school or college, often giving the learners the option of taking it or leaving it. It is not surprising that a lot of people end up leaving it. Adults who are now looking for help with reading and writing are often those who have not been offered anything they could take and they are mainly from the working class community. We believe strongly that education exists for the learners and should serve *their* purposes not those of the tutor or the organising body.

This book aims to enable people within that community to organise their own learning to meet their own needs - both as individuals and as groups. It is particularly for those who are interested in improving their reading and writing skills as part of their usual activities in a group which meets for another purpose.

That purpose may be just about anything. Any group which attempts to change things (like the provision of community facilities), to understand things or to make better use of what's around them (like the

friendship and support of other people) needs to be able to read, understand and criticise the relevant written material. It also needs to be able to communicate its ideas clearly. The use of written language is of extreme importance.

In a town in the South of England a group of women who were all single parents came together originally to learn about the benefits that they could claim. In talking about benefits some of them decided that they would like to be able to read the leaflets and other information better. Others felt like writing to ask for better information but did not know how to start. So they decided to work together to improve their reading and writing. They began by looking at the question of benefits and then moved on to read and write about all the other problems and advantages that they have in common as single parents. They were all able to help each other with some part of it - either the reading, the writing, the talking or the action.

If a group meets because of shared aims, its members will already have much common ground of interest, attitude and knowledge. This common ground can form the basis of what is read, written and discussed.

Some people will be better than others at all or some of these skills, but there is certainly room for improvement in everyone. Improved communication means a greater chance of actually achieving the progress you want.

This book aims to show that it is possible to find your own ways of learning within a situation where the learners are already familar with most of the other people, most of the ideas and probably the surroundings. This involves the learners in choosing the topics and times, places and methods of working.

When planning the book there were a number of points which we thought were important to remember about learning:

- ★ you must be able to understand the words used
- ★ you must feel comfortable about going to, and being in whatever building you are using
- ★ you must be able to choose what you want to learn and how you want to learn it
- ★ others are there to help you achieve your aims; you may well be able to help others in the same way.

These points form the basis of the ideas and suggestions in this book.

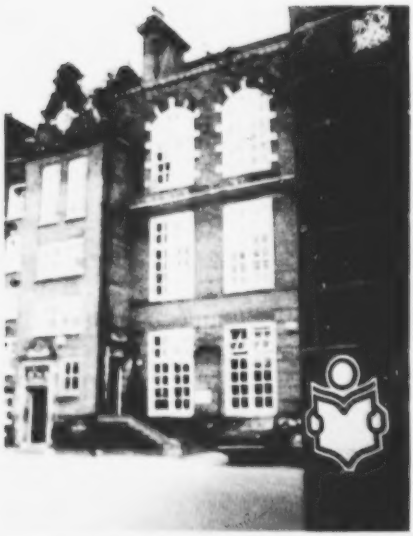
ARE YOU A HOMEWORKER?
Help for handicapped people
Facilities for the Under-Fives
Minor illness
How to treat it at home
Want legal help? Get Legal Aid

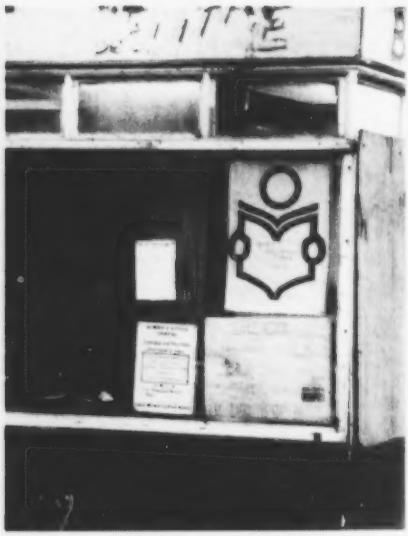
There are of course, other places where you can work at literacy - mainly in local authority adult education centres or in voluntary projects. These will all vary in the way in which they work. In order for your group to find the most suitable way of working you will have to decide exactly what everyone (which may be only two or three people) wants and then begin to work out how to achieve that.

One valuable step that we recommend in the book is to visit places where literacy groups are already working. If you do this you will find that many schemes operate on a system where people have definite roles as *either* student or tutor. We suggest that it is not essential to have this clear definition of roles. If you have been working together as a group already there is no reason why you should not continue to collaborate and help each other.

However in writing this book it has sometimes been difficult to avoid referring to 'tutors'. By this we mean whoever is engaged in helping someone else to learn at a given time. Clearly some people will spend more time than others in this. The important thing to remember is that everyone is both contributing to the teaching and profiting from the learning.

The other point worth repeating is that you should decide what *you* want and then use others' knowledge and experience to find the way of making it happen. If a way of working doesn't suit you, don't use it just because others do. On the other hand, do ask yourself why someone else uses a particular method or style.





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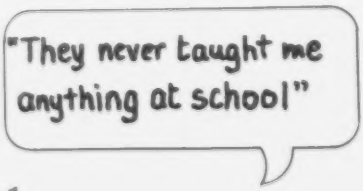
2 Getting Going

Firstly, you need time to discuss what you are aiming at. This need not involve the whole group - just those who have already said that they are interested in working on some aspect of language or literacy. You'll probably find that as your discussions widen, other people will take an interest. If you can spread the discussions, so much the better: a chat over a beer, or during a lull in a playgroup session can be more use than a formal meeting.

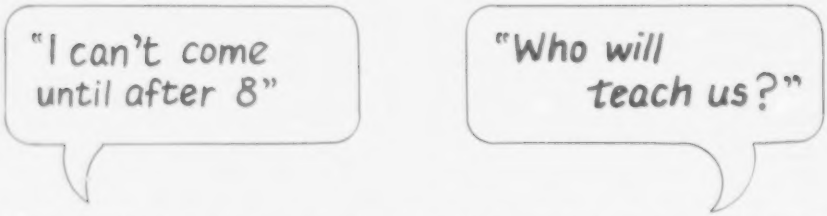
A good starting point is to list what people actually hope to be able to do. Such a list may include things relevant to the group and individual aims. For example, write a letter to the local Member of Parliament (MP), understand a tax office form, read bedtime stories for children, learn the Highway Code, express ideas. Discussion about these aims will lead on to how "good" or "bad" people think they are at reading, writing and spelling. Some may consider themselves unable to do much at all, while others may be confident that they can read just about anything but spell virtually nothing.

Talking around this will also include WHY people think they are "bad" at reading, writing and spelling, and this will provide an indication of the sort of learning and teaching they want. People should have the opportunity to talk in twos and threes as well as in a larger group, for many will find it difficult to give their opinions in public.

The sort of comments likely to emerge may include this sort of thing;



They will also bring up other issues, such as how you are going to go about organising the group.



Comments like these will show up the areas that need detailed preparation:

- ★ finding a place and time convenient for everyone, or a flexible way of working
- ★ deciding what you want to happen in the meetings, i.e. how the learning situation will work and whether you will need help from more people who already have reading and writing skills
- ★ estimating costs and deciding whether to try and get some funding.

When everyone who is interested has had a chance to talk round the subject, and you have a rough idea of numbers, you can really start to get something organised.

First of all you need at least one person prepared to get some more information. This will take effort, money (for fares and telephone calls) and a good deal of time.

In the next section, Looking Outwards, there are suggestions as to how someone, or preferably several people, can find out the information you need from various sources.

3

Looking Outwards

If you visit literacy schemes which are in operation you will immediately get a good idea of what actually goes on. This can form the basis of a discussion about what you want and what you don't want.

Basically, you need to collect information and report back on these areas:

- ★ how other literacy groups operate and what sort of learning and teaching is done
- ★ premises
- ★ money

Divide up the work: while someone visits a scheme, someone else could visit the Local Education Authority, or Public Library, and someone else could write letters (useful organisations to contact are mentioned below). Share the feedback you get. Most of your group will be particularly interested to know what the other schemes are like. Other than their own experience of school, or that of their children, they may not know what possibilities there are.

The more information that is gathered, the easier it will be for you to decide on what you want. You need to visit more than one scheme if possible to see how they work. You may wish to draw up a list of questions to ask. There is an example on the opposite page.

Share the answers with others in your organisation.

How often does the group meet?

How many learners/tutors are there?

Are they working in small groups or one large one?

How long do people stay?

What are people actually doing?

Do people work together on an equal basis?

Is there a coffee break? – what happens during it?

Are the tutors paid?

What materials are being used?

What's the atmosphere like?

Who decides on the topic and how is it approached?

You will need to ask specifically about premises and where people get there money from.

As well as going to literacy classes or projects there are plenty of other places you can visit or write to for help, advice and support. Keep an open mind and try not to be too rigid about what you are looking for. The local education authority is an obvious place to go – it may be able to help with funding and/or paying tutors. Libraries/Community Centres/Resource Centres/parts of universities and colleges e.g. Student Unions/Trades Unions and Voluntary bodies are all worth contacting. Be persistent – you may find someone unhelpful on a first approach, while at a second visit you may make a useful contact. The reverse is true too of course: the first person you talk to may be helpful, but turn out to have an unimaginative boss.

The question of tutors is a central issue. It is probably true to say that many people who want to learn think that they need some sort of teacher or helper to work with. Should that person be professionally qualified? Could it be someone already known to the group? Would a volunteer sympathetic to your aims be appropriate? This book cannot answer these questions; it is only by looking around that you can make a decision about what is right for you although it is quite likely that you will find all the help you need within your group.

If you already have premises available, so much the better. Check that the rooms you want are available at the times you want and are suitable. You may, for example, want to run a group for unemployed people on a weekday morning (avoiding signing-on day?) and another for a different group in the evening. Ideally you need a room where you won't be disturbed by people passing through, or by a telephone. Will the members need a creche for their children?

You may have to seek somewhere outside the usual meeting place of your present group. If so, make sure that it is accessible to the people who'll be using it – is it far from a bus stop? Will an upstairs room limit who can reach it? A school might be a convenient place but some adults might feel uncomfortable there.

Some rooms are more comfortable than others ▶

The question of finding money is discussed in the section on funding. But before you start looking for financial sources, decide exactly what you need money for. It's possible to run a literacy group within an existing organisation for very little. On the other hand, if you decide to employ a professional tutor, rent a room, heat it, and buy new materials - you'll need plenty. Even if you're not paying wages you may want to pay fares and petrol. Telephone calls may need to be paid for. Compare your ideas with other literacy schemes.

If you decide that people want to work singly, in pairs, or small groups - as opposed to the whole group - you will need someone to organise it. Everybody involved in learning needs support. You could have meetings to discuss what you're all doing, or you may want someone to be a co-ordinator. If they are doing this as a regular job, you should consider paying them.

Any time spent "Looking Outwards" can only be profitable to you, as it enables you to identify what is and what is not appropriate to your particular needs.

4

If you need Money ...

How much work you need to put into fund-raising depends on the scale of your activities and if you have a parent organisation, how much that can give you. Some literacy groups run on little or no money. If you start a scheme you certainly needn't become involved in complex, formal grant applications dealing with thousands of pounds. Local fund-raising might be a more solid beginning, making the most of good will and your main resource — the people around you.

It is always important to have clear priorities, so, when fund raising you need to know what you want next and how much it will cost. You might have to choose, for example, between buying paper and books, and a typewriter. Find out at an early stage what your money will buy. For example, the local education office or appropriate union (National Association of Teachers of Further and Higher Education) will tell you what the current rates of pay are for adult education tutors. Decide too, what you can do without for the time being, or what someone else can provide you with or lend you.

If you raise at least some of the money locally - jumble sales, raffles, sponsored events - you will gain publicity and hopefully impress others by your ability to get going without needing large sums. That makes it easier to make formal grant applications later on, should you wish to do so.

These are the main areas where money may be available:

- ★ central government departments
- ★ local government
- ★ commerce and industry
- ★ charitable trusts

Applications to any of these will require preparation. You will have to write in detail about how much you want, what it will be used for and why you need it. Information must also be given about your organisation, its aims and about the need it serves. It is a good idea to prepare a sheet with these facts, taking particular care about presentation.

Whenever you want to approach an organisation find out who is the right contact i.e. find out the name and job title of the right person. Other people may be able to help you e.g. local councillors. The Central Government bodies directly concerned with literacy are the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (who fund innovative projects) and the Voluntary Service Unit of the Home Office (which has a responsibility to help voluntary organisations whose work straddles that of several different government departments). The Manpower Services Commission can also fund some types of projects run by voluntary organisations.

The Arts Council, Sports Council, Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and Housing Corporation are some of the other agencies to whom you might apply if the area of your work is of special interest to them. The European Economic Community is also prepared to fund work by voluntary bodies if matched by government money.

Commerce, industry and charities might be more prepared to assist you towards a specific area of work rather than for running costs such as rent.

Various departments of the local authority may give you money if your work is relevant to them e.g. Social Services, Youth Service, Education.

Remember that if you do receive money you may find there are conditions of acceptance that you are not completely happy about. So check up on this in case your independence is at risk. Don't forget to send reports about your progress to any organisation that does give you money.

When considering making an application it is often worth taking advice either from books or from the organisations that produced them. These might include the Directory of Social Change, the Charities Aid Foundation (who publish the Directory of Grant Making Trusts) the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (BASSAC), Education for Neighbourhood Change (who publish "Getting Self Propelled" with a money-raising check list) and the National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes.

Below is a check-list you can use and over the page are some useful addresses. At the back of the book there is room to make a note of your own local contacts.

RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Where you might be able to get some of the things you need.

	Money (for salaries, rent, electricity, phone, furniture etc.)	Materials (books, paper etc.)	Rooms	Publicity	Information and advice	Training
Central Govt. VSU	✓					
ALBSU	✓				✓	✓
DOE (Urban aid)	✓					
Local Govt. LEA including youth service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social services	✓		✓	✓		
Recreation and Leisure		✓	✓	✓		
Libraries		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Community Workers				✓	✓	
Local Voluntary Organisations		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Local Community groups			✓	✓	✓	
Local newspapers				✓		
Local industry and commerce	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Local and national Charities and Trusts	✓					
Trades Union		✓	✓	✓		
NFVLS				✓	✓	✓
Regional Advisory Council for Further Education						✓

Most funding comes with some sort of strings attached. Some are more likely to strangle you than others.

These are some of the conditions we have come across.

- ★ outsiders on your decision-making body
- ★ registers of attendance to be kept
- ★ minimum of . . . . in the learning group
- ★ no 'unqualified' tutors
- ★ you must be innovatory
- ★ you must prepare accounts every month
- ★ not allowed to choose your own staff
- ★ not allowed to use your own premises
- ★ can't spend the money on things you actually need
- ★ can't spend the money when you need to spend it
- ★ payment only made retrospectively
- ★ you must write weekly/monthly/quarterly/annual reports
- ★ you have to report back on group members to the DHSS/DE etc.
- ★ you have to take group members sent by other bodies (often the ones they don't want)
- ★ there are strict limits on the things you can read, write and talk about
- ★ you have to raise an equal amount (or more) from another source
- ★ funding subject to regular review and renewal.

Body	*Contact address*	*Area of Interest*
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit	Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1 01-405 4017	Innovatory projects in basic education
Home Office (i)	50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT 01-213 3000	'Assisting persons convicted of offences with a view to their rehabilitation'
Home Office (ii) Voluntary Service Unit	50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT 01-213 7079	Projects covering several departmental areas
Manpower Services Commission	Selkirk House, 166 High Holborn, London WC1V 6PB 01-836 1213	Employment directed training and work projects (constantly changing)
Department of the Environment Urban Programme	2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 3EB 01-212 3434	Costs that might normally be met by a local authority in meeting 'special social needs'
Arts Council	105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU 01-629 9495	Performing arts and exhibitions: administration of arts education schemes
Sports Council	70 Brompton Road, London, SW3 1EX 01-589 3411 (also regional councils)	'youth organisations and and other bodies which include sport and physical activities in their programme'
Equal Opportunities Commission	Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN	Educational activities which work towards the elimination of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally

Commission for Racial Equality	Elliott House, 10/12 Allington Street, London, SW1E 5EH 01-828 7022	Projects or Self-Help groups, including those set up to provide education for people from ethnic minorities likely to be alienated from existing provision.
Housing Corporation	Maple House, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0BN 01-387 9466	Can make funds available for the purpose of providing co-operative education and training in the field of housing
British Council	65 Davies Street, London, W1Y 2AA 01-499 8011	
Commission for the New Towns	Glen House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5AJ 01-828 8631	Grants available to voluntary bodies from the New Town's amenity funds.

It is probable that no more than one or two of these bodies will be appropriate to your group. If you think you might be eligible for a grant, the first thing to do is to contact the body and get fuller details of what they can and will give money for.

5

Learners and Learning

As the framework of your literacy group emerges the people in it will be concerned about how it is actually going to be run. Your initial discussions may have thrown up solid areas of agreement, particularly over subject matter, but they will also have shown enormous differences in attitudes to learning and in the level of literacy skills.

These differences cannot be resolved by any particular formula, so the best answer seems to be to provide for everyone and be prepared to make changes. For example, two people may insist that they need a "real teacher" and individual attention. Another may want help with spelling only. Someone else just needs their letters checked through for punctuation. Not everyone will want a tutor around – they'd be happy to write alone and only lack the right situation.

The best tutors are likely to be found within the group. They don't have to be people who can read and write without making any mistakes – but they do need to be people who can help others and give them confidence to learn in the way that suits them best.

Whatever way the group decides to work the learners will want to know how they are going to spend their sessions. In particular, how much time will be spent on writing/reading/listening/talking.

Your first sessions are bound to be experimental. There must be room for people to change their minds as they become more aware of the opportunities that exist and as their needs and interests grow and change.

Another factor which also determines ways of working is the stability of the group. If you have people from outside the group coming to work with you, you are entitled to ask for a commitment of, say, a year. Regular attendance by all the group will mean a better learning atmosphere. A frequent turnover may mean that some people's needs are not being met in the way they had hoped, or perhaps the sessions clash with a work rota, or bus times.

The way you work must reflect the needs of the group, and you may find you have to change the times of meetings, or start up a creche, even if you were sure you'd thought of everything before starting.

Some different ways of working

- ★ In a large group (up to about 12)
- ★ In small groups
- ★ In pairs
- ★ Individually - with someone to give help if it is needed
- ★ In pairs or small groups, coming together sometimes to let each other know what you are doing, to discuss progress or share information
- ★ In a large group with individuals or small groups splitting off from time to time to do specific tasks or pieces of work
- ★ Any mixture of these.

Help with learning

If you are going to help someone else to learn to read you need to be aware of what you already know and what it is you are trying to pass on. You also need some ideas as to the best ways of passing it on.

As a starting point you need:

- ★ to know how you usually read and write as adults
- ★ to have an idea of the different ways of learning that you can use
- ★ to know what strategies you use when reading
- ★ to be aware of the different ways of reading you use with different texts e.g. novel, telephone directory
- ★ to have an idea of the different strategies adults use to put their words on paper, depending on who is going to read it
- ★ to have an idea of the different sorts of writing that adults do
- ★ to explore ways of keeping a note of what you have been doing and what you plan
- ★ to decide what to do next and in the future
- ★ to get some ideas of the sorts of materials and activities you might use to help you.

How can we gather this information?

- ★ You already know quite a lot of it - it's just a case of bringing it out by thinking and talking about the various questions.

So some ways of tackling these questions are to:

- ★ talk with each other and ask somebody to take some notes for future reference
- ★ ask one or two people to read something and pass on the information to the rest of the group
- ★ experiment and share your experiences and feelings
- ★ make a tape and/or video for yourselves
- ★ borrow a tape and/or video from somewhere
- ★ work out some questions and ask somebody to come along to help you find answers
- ★ work out some questions together and try answering them in small groups
- ★ plan to visit other places and get information that you can share with everyone else.

How can you store this information?

- ★ you can tape it
- ★ you can keep it in a ring binder where everyone can have access
- ★ you can each have copies.

One thing that's clear is that one person can't do all this on their own. Talking around the questions and trying out ideas on other people are both essential and so you will need to work as a group.

At some stage during this process you will want to start the actual process of helping each other to learn. This will probably seem a bit daunting at first – but don't worry. Everyone – whatever their level of reading – has ideas about how they learn best and what are useful ways of working. If you share these ideas you will have no trouble getting going. Once you have started you will find that that is when the best insight and more ideas come to you. The process of learning is a continuous one – as long as you are working on reading and writing you will be making progress.

The group should be clear that there are a variety of strategies involved in reading and learning, before deciding on a particular way of working, as many people may not be aware of any other method than that used at whatever school(s) they attended.

If you go along to the local literacy scheme you will probably find that they run training courses for their volunteer tutors. These will probably be courses of 4-6 x 2 hour sessions, covering the sort of topics which were set out earlier. It may well be possible to fit into one of these courses if you want to, but don't underestimate the value of sitting down as a group to discover some answers for yourselves. Then, having found out the areas where you need to know more, invite an experienced tutor/trainer to come along and help on these specific issues.

Once you start working you will always want to top up or exchange your ideas with other people. This is a particularly good time to bring in people from outside with different experience to talk with the group as a way of freshening up your ideas.

It is possible that you may have to bring in people from outside the group to help with learning to read and write. If so, make sure that they recognise and are capable of working along with your aims. Make sure also that they are able to give you a regular commitment for at least, say, a year.

Ways of learning

Everybody learns in different ways. How do you find it best to learn? What are your own strengths and weaknesses?

Some ways of learning are:

★ by watching someone else

★ by copying someone else

★ by practising

★ by listening
  a) to someone else
  b) to a tape
  c) to someone else who is learning

★ by following instructions
  a) from a person
  b) from a book

★ by trial and error

★ by asking
  a) someone else
  b) a friend

★ by a variety of all the ways here

by any other ways that work for you.

Our own reading and writing

We asked ourselves some questions about our own reading and writing. These are the questions and some of the things we came up with.

★ What have you read recently?

books, newspapers, instruction manuals, brochures, guide books, cookery books, phone directory, timetables, A-Z Directory, dictionary.

★ Have you met any words whose meaning was unfamiliar? What did you do?

Yes. Read on to see what fitted, asked someone, used a dictionary.

★ Have you met passages where you had to 'read between the lines' to infer what the author was trying to say?

newspaper, ads, satirical writing, letters, poetry.

★ Have you used texts where you needed to skip large chunks of material in order to find the piece of information you needed.

dictionary, text books, telephone directory.

★ What have you written recently?

letters, cheques, reports, addresses, job applications, diary, questionnaire, shopping lists, directions, messages, notices.

★ Have you had to make any preliminary drafts of written material before writing or typing a fair copy?

applications, official letters, reports.

★ Are there any writing activities that you put off as long as possible?

tax forms, writing letters.

★ Have you to your knowledge made any spelling mistakes? How did you realise? What did you do about it?

Yes. It didn't look right. Asked someone, used a dictionary, used a different word, left it as it was.

Let's have a closer look at what's involved.

What strategies do you use when reading?

When you read something you may

- ★ skim through the piece to get a rough idea of what it's about
- ★ scan through the piece to find a particular piece of information that you need.

When you read you don't read every word. You can leave out some words and still get the meaning. This is a good way of coping with words you don't know. A good reader probably uses this method more than any other.

If there are still words you don't know then there are a number of different ways of working them out. You can:

- ★ break them into smaller bits - beginnings and endings may give a clue.
- ★ try and build up the word using the sounds of the letters and groups of letters.
- ★ relate the new word to similar words you already know.
- ★ look for familiar words inside the difficult word (e.g. information).

To be sure of the meaning you also need to be aware of the punctuation. In your own reading you may notice that you also use other ways of getting at the meaning.

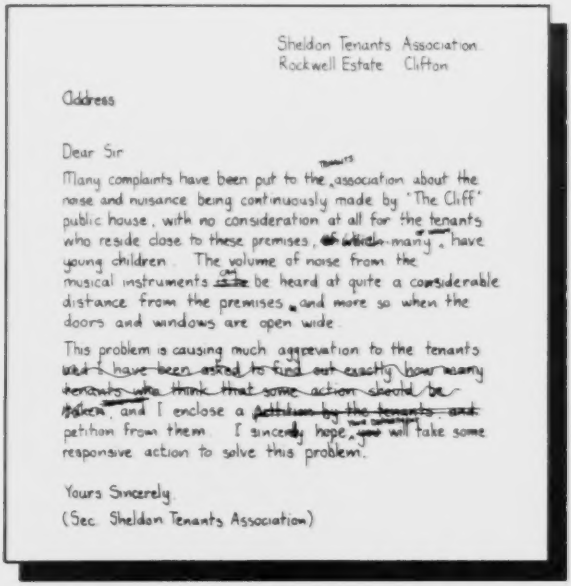
What sort of things do you think about when writing?

Who are you writing for?:

- ★ for yourself? (e.g. shopping list)
- ★ for someone you know? (e.g. a message)
- ★ for a person you've never met? (e.g. job application)
- ★ for a larger defined audience? (e.g. a motor-bike magazine)
- ★ for a wider general audience? (e.g. letter to a newspaper)

What do you want to say?

- ★ will you jot down notes before writing?
- ★ will you consult with anyone else?
- ★ will you make a rough draft first?
- ★ will you show the final version to someone else?
- ★ are you willing to alter it?
- ★ is the most important thing to get your ideas across, or to impress the reader(s)?



Sheldon Tenants Association
Rockwell Estate Clifton

Address

Dear Sir

Many complaints have been put to the tenants' association about the noise and nuisance being continuously made by 'The Cliff' public house, with no consideration at all for the tenants who reside close to these premises, ~~of which~~ many have young children. The volume of noise from the musical instruments can be heard at quite a considerable distance from the premises, and more so when the doors and windows are open wide.

This problem is causing much aggravation to the tenants ~~and I have been asked to find out exactly how many tenants who think that some action should be taken~~, and I enclose a ~~petition by the tenants and~~ petition from them. I sincerely hope you will take some responsive action to solve this problem.

Yours Sincerely

(Sec. Sheldon Tenants Association)

How will you present it?

- ★ Do you need to write it clearly?
- ★ Do you need to type it?
- ★ Does it need to be split up into paragraphs/sections/headings?
- ★ should it have large/narrow gaps between lines and at the sides of the page

Is correct spelling vital? It may only be vital at the final stage.

Some ways of checking/working at spellings are:

- ★ read through what you've written
- ★ think of words that sound the same and are spelt the same
- ★ use sounds
- ★ build up words from parts
- ★ use a dictionary
- ★ there may be some helpful rules
- ★ ask someone

Sheldon Tenants Association,
Rockwell Estate, Clifton.

Chief Public Health Inspector,
Municipal Offices,
Warcom Street, S15 9VJ

Dear Sir,

Many complaints have been put to the Tenants Association about the noise and nuisance being continuously made by "The Cliff" public house with no consideration at all for the tenants who reside close to these premises, many of whom have young children. The volume of noise from the musical instruments can be heard at quite a considerable distance from the premises and more so when the doors and windows are open wide.

This problem is causing much aggravation to the tenants and I enclose a petition from them. I sincerely hope your department will take some responsive action to solve this problem.

Yours sincerely,
(Sec. Sheldon Tenants Association)

This is a list of books and passages that you may find useful to read and share. Some pieces may be more relevant than others and there will certainly be other books not mentioned here that will be helpful. Details of the publishers etc. can be found in the notes at the back.

Topic	Reference
Attitudes	*How's it going?* pp 9-10
Adult Learning and Ways of Learning	*Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 7-9 *BBC Writing and Spelling Book*, pp 31-32
Learning through your own immediate needs	*Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 6-7 *Approach to functional literacy*, pp 22-23 *How's it Going?* pp 6-7, 38, 39-39 *Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 4 and 11 *Approach to Functional Literacy*, pp 9-12, 14-17, 17-20, 23-24, 24-26, 27-28
Reading Strategies	*How's it Going?* pp 11, 46, 41-42 *Let Loose*, pp 114-117 *Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 12-16, 16-22 *Approach to Functional Literacy*, pp 29-32, 38-45, 23-24, 25-28 *Reading, How To*, pp 29-61, 62-84, 85-103, 104-111, 147-161
Writing Strategies	*Write Away*, - Whole book *How's it Going?* pp 11-12, 60, 63, 64-66, 70-71 *Let Loose*, pp 62-63, 69-71 *Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 29-38 *Helping Adults to Spell*, - Whole book *BBC Writing and Spelling Book*, - Whole book
Checking progress	*How's it Going?* pp 29, 29-30 *Intro. to Literacy Teaching*, pp 46-48 *BBC Writing and Spelling Book*, pp 52-53
General	*Working with Words*

We have given some examples of skills that everyone uses in reading and writing and some references to books that you can look at to help you. However we emphasise that these are only examples and starting points. You will need to do lots of talking, both amongst yourselves and with other people, and you will need to keep repeating the thinking and talking as you get on with the process of helping each other to read and write.

Just because you are temporarily in the role of 'tutor' does not mean that you stop learning - quite the opposite.

6

Reading and Writing Materials

It is perfectly possible to start without materials at all, other than paper and something to write with, provided you have a suitable room with tables and chairs. The right sort of tables and chairs are important: it's hard to get heads together over a book, or to write properly if one of you is sunk into an armchair with nothing to lean on. Make sure that you have enough light.

You do not need to buy large stocks of books immediately although you'll probably want to build up a collection as time goes on. People's own ideas are a good starting point for writing, talking and reading what everyone else has written.

The aims and activities of the parent organisation are likely to be an important part of all your work. Other shared areas of interest include jobs, homes, schools, public transport and current affairs. There is plenty of free or cheap published information about all of these, and you can obtain it easily: the Highway Code, (local) newspapers, publicity handouts, bus timetables. The collection of such literature should be the concern of the whole group.

Home made materials can be especially useful. Any training course should show tutors how to go about making aids that will help the techniques of spelling and reading. An important part of making materials is to distinguish between words that you use a lot in talking and words that you actually have to spell a lot.

Over the last few years many more materials have been produced for learning to read. An important development has been the number of books written by adult learners about their own lives. These are very popular and form the basis of much of the work done in literacy groups. Also, ideas packs have been published containing practical suggestions. An increasing amount of educational publishers are producing series of fiction and non-fiction books aimed at adult learners.

▲ *Some sort of storage*

Other more expensive items that you may find yourself wanting are dictionaries (there are several clear, simple ones) a typewriter, duplicator, display board, bookshelves and games. Some of these can be borrowed of course, even if it is only for one session at a time.

An obvious source of books is the library. Explain your needs to the librarians who should be able to make a block loan of books, and may have other useful facilities. Beware, however, of being palmed off with an elderly collection of children's books, or large print readers.

Try to get to one of the literacy projects which house bookshops (or ask NFVLS for advice) so that you can browse through and choose what is most suitable for your group. "Write First Time" deserves a special mention: it is a newspaper published three times a year, containing writing from adult literacy students all over the country. It is well produced and especially valuable in helping students feel less isolated.

Write First Time have produced a 'List of books by Adults learning to write'. It costs 10p from Write First Time, Westbourne Centre, Westbourne Road, Bedford.

Making materials

- Make sure the instructions are clear
- Use everyday common words
- Concentrate on only one activity on each worksheet or card
- Don't over simplify so that the activity in fact becomes harder
- Perhaps use a variety of colour for emphasis
- Is your handwriting readable?
- Make sure that you have some space around the outside of the writing and don't have the lines of writing too close together.
- If the worksheet or card is one that you will want to use for some time it might be a good idea to cover it in clear film
- If you are putting pictures with the writing make sure you cut neatly rather than tear round the edges
- Use a title that tells you what is on the worksheet
- If you are putting bits of words on different cards make sure that when cards are put together that the letters are close enough to each other that they read as one word
- If you can't write straight, draw a line
- If you aren't happy with your writing, ask someone else or use a typewriter
- Do you have access to a photocopier, a spirit duplicator, an ink duplicator, letraset? If so make sure you know how to use them and what they are best used for
- How are you going to store material so that you can all find it easily?
- Make sure that the content of the worksheet is relevant to those using it.
- If you are using ready-made materials you will have to think about the same sort of things.

7

Have a Go

This book is an aid to setting up your own learning group, but its aim is not to tell you **how** to do it, but to give some guidelines as to how to set about the task and where to look for help. The central message is that you can do it and that the main resources are to be found in yourself and within your group of people.

The most important thing to remember is that learning – whether it is learning to read, learning to set up a group or learning to write applications for funding – is about sharing knowledge and decisions. If someone who thinks of herself as a tutor lectures at someone who sees herself as a literacy student, then not much learning will take place. Similarly, if one person gathers all the information and makes all the decisions then you won't have much of a group.

If you are in the role of tutor then you have to lay open the knowledge that you have and be honest about the knowledge or abilities that you don't have. If you are co-ordinating a group then you have to lay open the information you have collected and allow others the chance to say how it can best be used.

In this book we have often said that you do not need much in the way of materials or money to set up a learning group. This is true for the sort of groups we envisage using the book. These will be groups who have other valuable resources in the form of an existing shared interest and common sense of purpose. We would not like it to be thought, however, that we are suggesting that all basic education can operate in this way. The vast majority of people wanting help are not part of this sort of group and are looking to their local education authority to make substantial provision. Much progress has been made in this area since 1975. Helping people to work through their own existing networks is just one more step to be taken. Much more remains to be done.

The overall message of this book is 'Have a Go'. You will be surprised at the number of people willing to help. If you need more advice on anything the NFVLS would be pleased to try and help. If you do have a go we would like to hear about it. If you have ideas as to how the book can be improved we would like to hear those too. Our address is: NFVLS, Cambridge House, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5. Tel: 01-703 8083.

When you have read this book we suggest that you

- ★ pass it on to someone else to read
- ★ discuss it
- ★ talk to people within your group
- ★ talk to others who might be able to help
- ★ be clear about what it is you want to do
- ★ have a go.

Details of books referred to in Section 5.

An Approach to Functional Literacy: *(Adult Literacy Resource Agency 1977)*

BBC Writing and Spelling Handbook: *(BBC Publications 1979)*

Helping Adults to Spell: C. Moorhouse, *(Adult Literacy Resource Agency 1977)*

How's It Going?: M. Good & J. Holmes. *(Adult Literacy Unit 1978)*

Introduction to Literacy Teaching: *(Adult Literacy Unit 1979)*

Let Loose: *(Write First Time 1978)*

Reading, How to: H. Kohl, *(Penguin Education 1973)*

Working With Words: J. Mace, *(Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative 1979)*

Write Away: R. Lesirge & C. Moorhouse, *(BBC Publications 1979)*

Books published by the Adult Literacy Resource Agency and by the Adult Literacy Unit can be obtained from ALBSU, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1.

Use this page to keep your own list of local bodies and contacts

	Body/Department	Phone No.	Name of Contact	Notes
LOCAL GOVERNMENT Local Education Authority				
Adult Education Centre				
Literacy Scheme				
Other Departments				
LOCAL INDUSTRY				
OTHER VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS Council for Voluntary Service				
PRESS Newspaper				
Radio				
OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS				

NFVLS can provide you with details and addresses of any organisations mentioned in this book.

The people who prepared this book work in a variety of situations involving basic education for adults. We are all members of NFVLS and share the common aims and attitudes stated in the introduction.

Further copies available from
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit,
Kingsbourne House, 229-231 High Holborn,
London WC1V 7DA.
Telephone: 01-405 4017